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## THE COLD TUESDAY.

J. O. Cunningham, of Urbana, Ill.

Many of the older of the early settlers will remember the stories told by those here as early as the year 1836, of the cold Tuesday of that year. It is said to have happened on the 16th day of December, 1836. Hardly anyone remains among us who has personal recollections, so our information must be second-hand.

Rev. Enoch Kingsbury, whom some will remember as a long-time pastor of the Presbyterian church of Danville, in December, 1857, twenty-one years after the happening of the event, wrote an account of the events of the day, which was published in the Danville Independent. This best tells the story:

“The weather on Monday was quite warm, softening the heavy snow. On Tuesday it began to rain before day and continued until four in the afternoon, at which time the ground was covered with water and melting snow. All the small streams were very full and large ones rapidly rising. At this crisis there arose a large and tumultuous looking cloud in the west, with a rumbling noise. On its approach everything congealed. In less than five minutes it changed from a warm atmosphere to one of intense cold, and flowing water to ice.”

“One says he started his horse to a gallop in the mud and water and, on going a quarter of a mile, he was bounding over ice and frozen ground. Another, that in an hour after the change he passed over a stream of two feet deep on ice, which actually froze solid to the bottom and remained so until spring. The North Fork, where it was rapid and so full as to overflow its bottoms, froze

over so solid that night that horses crossed next morning, and it was thus with all of the streams."

"Mr. Alvin Gilbert, with his men, was crossing the prairie from Bicknell's to Sugar Creek, with a large drove of hogs. Before the cloud came over them the hogs and horses showed the greatest alarm and apprehensions of danger. And when it actually came upon them, the hogs, refusing to go any farther, began to pile themselves in one vast heap as their best defense on an open prairie. During the night half a dozen of them perished, and those on the outside were so frozen down that they had to be cut loose. About twelve others died on their way to Chicago, in consequence of being badly frozen, while many others lost large pieces of their flesh. Mr. Gilbert and his young men rode five or six miles distant, all of them having fingers, toes or ears frozen, and the harness so frozen that it could not be unhitched from the wagon, and scarcely from the horses."

"Two men riding across the same prairie, a little farther west, came to a stream so wide and deep that they could not cross it. The dreary night came on, and after exercising in vain to keep from freezing, they killed one horse, rolled his back to the wind, took out his entrails and thrust in their hands and feet, while they lay upon them. And so they would have used the other horse, but for the loss of their knife. Mr. Frame, the younger and more thinly clad, gradually froze and died in great agony at daybreak. The other, Mr. Hildreth, at sunrise, mounted the remaining horse and rode over the ice five miles to a house, but so badly frozen that about half of each hand and foot came off."

"How general or extensive the change was is not known; but the Illinois River, as two men in a boat were crossing it, froze in, and they exercised to save their lives until the ice would bear them up. The dog that accompanied them was frozen to death."

“On the east side of Indiana one man had fifty head of hogs frozen to death. Many similar facts might be narrated, but the above are sufficient to show that the change was great, sudden and general.”

A paper in the western part of the state published the following:

“The sudden freeze of 1836 was not perceptibly felt east of Cincinnati, and in Illinois and Indiana its width extended from Ottawa south as far as Terre Haute. Within that limit its effects were fearful. It came with a strong wind, accompanied with a heavy black cloud, and a roaring noise, not unlike distant deep thunder. Its velocity was about twenty-five miles an hour. The most remarkable phenomenon was the intensity of the cold. Nothing like it has ever been known since. The wind in its fury and power blew the water into little sharply defined waves, which froze as they stood, leaving the ponds, creeks and rivers, crusted with a heavy coat of ice. The snow, slush and mud were suddenly congealed into a mass strong enough to sustain the weight of a team and wagon. Some of the incidents related in the experience of people exposed to the storm are almost incredible but well attested.”

“The storm passed over Burlington about ten o'clock in the forenoon, December 16, 1836. We have no local record concerning the effect there, but across the river the people had some strange experiences. The morning was warm and misty. The snow had melted to a thick watery slush, and the gutters were full of water. Men were about their daily avocations without their coats. Suddenly the cloud appeared. Its loud and deep notes of warning gave them hardly time to grasp their coats and get to a place of safety. Cattle, hogs and fowls were frozen in their tracks, unable to extricate themselves. Many died before help could come. Many persons were frozen so severely that death ensued in a few days, and others were crippled for life. The effect was terrible. and

is best, illustrated, perhaps, out of the many instances on record, by the experience of a gentleman living in Springfield, who was out with a drove of hogs when the storm came suddenly upon them. They abandoned the hogs and drove rapidly to a house a mile or two away. When they arrived there some had their hands frozen and could do nothing for the teams. The next day they started out to find their hogs. Coming to where they had left them, they found a pyramid of porkers. The hogs huddled together when the storm struck them, those on the inside smothering, those on the outside freezing."

"As the wave passed over McLean County, it encountered a party of men working in the field, one of whom had with him a heavy overcoat. It had become rather wet with the mist, and as the wave came over the party, its owner hastily proceeded to put it on. As he raised it over his head for that purpose the cold wave swept by, blowing the coat several feet from where he stood. It happened to light 'head up and tail down,' as he expressed it, where it stood, arms extended, frozen stiff as a board. 'Maybe you think that's a pretty tall story,' remarked he to a crowd of companions, to whom he was relating the occurrence. 'Pretty stiff, I should think,' remarked a listener. 'Stiff! I should say it was stiff, and if you had been there and seen it, you would believe it,' answered the first one, not noticing the import of the remark."

"Other interesting incidents are given concerning the sudden freeze of 1836, to which, no doubt, some of our older readers could add some valuable and entertaining contributions. The question naturally arises, 'Is the Mississippi Valley liable to any more sudden eruptions of the ice king like the unheralded and unwelcome invasion of 1836?'